

**March 1, 2017**

**Ash Wednesday**

Today is the beginning of the season of Lent. There is evidence of some kind of Lenten preparation for Easter dating back to the third century. The number of days in Lent, 40, has always had special spiritual significance regarding preparation. On Mount Sinai, preparing to receive the 10 Commandments, Moses stayed there with the Lord for 40 days and 40 nights. Elijah walked 40 days and 40 nights to the mountain of the Lord, Mount Sinai. Jesus fasted and prayed for 40 days and 40 nights in the desert before he began his public ministry. The numbers, 3, 7, and 40 have this kind of special meaning in scripture. They are biblical numbers indicating fullness, "the time is ripe."

Traditionally, Lent has been a time for time for discovering what we are doing wrong, a time to repent and turn back to Christ. Can't Lent also be seen as recognizing when we are doing things right? We wouldn't know what is wrong if we didn't know what is right. Shadows are revealed by the light.

### **An Examination of Consciousness**

I would like to invite you all now to do an Examination of Consciousness with me as a preparation for the coming season of Lent. Find a position that is good for you, close your eyes if you find that helpful, and listen to the following meditation from your heart.

*"I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing. It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dreams, for the adventure of being alive. It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed for fear of further pain! I want to know if you can sit with the pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, fade it, or fix it. I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own, if you can dance with the wilderness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning to be careful, to be realistic, or to remember the limitations of being human. It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself, if you can bear the accusations of betrayal and not betray your own soul. I want to know if you can be faithful and therefore trustworthy. I want to know if you can see beauty even when it is not pretty every day and if you can source your life from its presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon , "YES!"*

*It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done for the children. It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here, I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back. It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away. I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep, in the empty moments.”*

*Let it be our Lent to see how many of these describe us, and how many we wish did*